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AND THE COTTON PLANT.
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CURRENT EVENTS: THE DRIFT OF THINGS AS WE SEE IT.

Last week was rather eventful, even if there was no one incident of overshadowing importance. Congress reassembled Monday, and on Tuesday the President's message was read. And the Solons went to work with unusual promptness. Mr. Platt, of New York, brought in a surprise by introducing into the Senate a bill for reducing Southern representation in the House. The bill for increasing the powers of the Interstate Commerce Commission developed considerable opposition. The Latimer good roads bill was reported favorably. Over at Port Arthur fighting waxed hot and a considerable number of Russian battleships were sunk. Our American trusts were shocked by the announcement that tobacco trust methods may be investigated. The Mrs. Chadwick swindling case, which is stranger than fiction—even dime novel fiction—made a great appeal to lovers of the sensational.

Fierce Fighting at Port Arthur.

Realizing the importance of taking the fort before the arrival of the Russian Baltic fleet, the Japanese forces at Port Arthur have for days been making a most desperate assault on the besieged army. The capture of Two-Hundred and Three-Metre Hill involved a fearful loss of human life, but the little brown men thought it worth the cost. Fifteen thousand men were lost by the Japanese alone and the crest of the hill was literally torn to pieces by the bombardment. This hill is 650 feet high, is about two miles from the city, and seems to command the harbor. At any rate, the Japanese fire played havoc with the Russian vessels last week. And if one wishes a vivid account of what has been happening just on the other side of the earth from us, the following Associated Press story, December 10th, may interest him:

"The assault began in the early morning with a tremendous bombardment of the forts. For hours the whole fortified ridge was deluged with heavy shells. At noon the principal line of fortifications was a perfect hell of bursting shrapnel, and the spectacle was more wonderful than anything previously witnessed. Through the haze caused by the smoke of the bursting shells the assaulters could be seen emerging from the cover of the parallels, as well as swarming up the fortified ridge at half a dozen different points. Rifles, rapid-fire guns and machine guns blazed from the Russian position, where advances were made in the open. The men went down by hundreds. As fast as the assaulters were repulsed, more Japanese swarmed up, only to be mowed down in turn. The Japanese paralleled some 35 yards of the Russian trench line and an entire regiment charged across, the men falling by hundreds before the awful fire of the Russians. But still more men came on over the bodies of those who had fallen, and by sheer weight of numbers they reached the trenches which they captured at the point of the bayonet."

President Roosevelt's Message.

President Roosevelt's message to Congress is very long—so long that it was probably read in full by practically nobody except the Congressmen and the editors who have to comment upon it, and by not all of these. But it contains a

great many excellent recommendations and a good deal of sound philosophy that ought not to be lost in a long-winded public document. Especially notable are his recommendations for regulating railroad rates and prohibiting rebates, for preventing fraud in elections, for publishing the list of contributors to campaign funds, and for better naturalization regulations. The recommendation for making silver dollars redeemable in gold created some surprise. On the negro question President Roosevelt has nothing to say, and as to the tariff the same silence is maintained. This policy the New York Outlook, which "believes in a radical revision of the tariff," regards as wise. "The Republican Congressmen," it says, "are divided into three groups on the tariff; those who oppose any change; those who reluctantly concede that some minor modifications in schedules may be necessary; and those who believe in the adoption of a policy of reciprocity and a material reduction of the tariff on a certain considerable class of articles which no longer stand in any need of protection. Any explicit utterance of the President now would identify him with one or the other of these groups, and it is probably a wise policy for him to wait and see what can be done by private and personal influence to secure something like united action."

A Needed Movement for Railway Control.

To us the most gratifying feature of the message is the recommendation in regard to the Interstate Commerce Commission. Our giant monopolies—the Standard Oil Company for one conspicuous example—have nearly all been built up by special favors from railway lines, getting rebates and privileges not granted their competitors. "Above all else," says the President, "we must strive to keep the highways of commerce open to all on equal terms; and to do this it is necessary to put a complete stop to all rebates. Whether the shipper or the railroad is to blame makes no difference; the rebate must be stopped, the abuses of the private car and private terminal-track and side-track systems must be stopped, and the legislation of the Fifty-eighth Congress which declares it to be unlawful for any person or corporation to offer, grant, give, solicit, accept, or receive any rebate, concession, or discrimination in respect of the transportation of any property in inter-State or foreign commerce whereby such property shall by any device whatever be transported at less rate than that named in the tariffs published by the carrier must be enforced."

In my judgment the most important legislative act now needed as regards the regulation of corporations is this act to confer on the Interstate Commerce Commission the power to revise rates and regulations, the revised rate to at once go into effect, and to stay in effect unless and until the court of review reverses it."

But gratifying as is the President's utterance on this subject, it is humiliating to see the unchallenged announcement that the Republican leaders in Congress have given Wall Street assurances that his advice will not be heeded. The people ought to watch their representatives here. Those who favor allowing the railroads to extort unreasonable prices from shippers and destroy anti-trust industries, ought to be remembered at the polls.

Against Corruption in Politics.

In one other recommendation the President is probably very far in advance of his party. This is for the publication of campaign expenditures and the list of contributors to campaign funds. One of the most serious dangers to popular government is the bribery of parties and administrations by campaign funds—giant corporations making large donations to Republican or Democratic committees with the understanding, understood if not expressed, that these corporations

shall enjoy such special privileges as to enable them to extort even larger amounts from the people. And there is the other danger to our institutions in the improper expenditure of campaign funds, however obtained. "No one defends or excuses corruption," says President Roosevelt, "and it would seem to follow that none would oppose vigorous measures to eradicate it. I recommend the enactment of a law directed against bribery and corruption in Federal elections. The details of such a law may be safely left to the wise discretion of the Congress, but it should include severe penalties against him who gives or receives a bribe intended to influence his act or opinion as an elector; and provisions for the publication not only of the expenditures for nominations and elections of all candidates, but also of all contributions received and expenditures made by political committees."

The Philippines and Our Foreign Policy.

The President reaffirms his well-known views in regard to our attitude to the Filipinos. "At present they are utterly incapable of existing in independence at all, or of building up a civilization of their own," he says. "I most earnestly hope that in the end they will be able to stand, if not entirely alone, yet in some such relation to the United States as Cuba now stands. Within two years we shall be trying the experiment of an elective lower house in the Philippine Legislature. It may be that the Filipinos will misuse this Legislature, and they certainly will misuse it if they are misled by foolish persons here at home into starting an agitation for their independence."

The foreign policy advocated may be summed up in the now famous expression, "Speak softly and carry a big stick." A phrase which the President did not originate, but which he has made historic is, "the peace of justice." A strong navy and an efficient army he regards as essential to the preservation of this peace. "It is not merely unwise, it is contemptible, for a nation, as for an individual, to use high-sounding language to proclaim its purposes, or to take positions which are ridiculous if unsupported by potential force, and then to refuse to provide this force."

Miscellaneous Recommendations.

The President admits that labor unions are often beneficial, but declares that the Government cannot recognize them: the open shop must be maintained. "Wage workers," he says, "have an entire right to organize and by all peaceful and honorable means to endeavor to persuade their fellows to join with them in organizations. They have under no circumstances the right to commit violence upon those, whether capitalists or wage-workers, who refuse to support their organizations, or who side with those with whom they are at odds; for mob rule is intolerable in any form."

Stricter immigration laws are recommended, and legislation urged to prevent frauds in naturalization.

"I especially commend to your immediate attention the encouragement of our merchant marine by appropriate legislation," says the President. But it is to be hoped that he will not support the vicious ship subsidy scheme, which is likely to appear again at this session.

The proposition to hold at Hampton Roads in 1909 a tricentennial celebration of the Jamestown settlement is warmly commended. Our Virginia readers will regret to learn, however, that the House committee does not look kindly on the proposition for a \$5,000,000 appropriation.

As to the trusts, Mr. Roosevelt does not take a very decided stand. "Great corporations are necessary," he argues, "and only men of singular mental power can manage such corporations successfully, and such men must have great rewards."